

July 5, 2005

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to convey to you my strong support for the 2005 Ortho-photography program. This support comes from a number of viewpoints.

First, as GIS Manager for the Hammond Sanitary District, this photography is a godsend. Our photography is ten years old and in desperate need of an update. Given the present fiscal state of communities in Lake County due to the recent tax assessment, we could not afford to re-fly our city and replace the photography. This ortho project came along at just the right time. Our county has wisely decided to leverage this initial investment from Homeland Security dollars to buy-up to the higher 6-inch resolution. Soon I will have a direct replacement for my 1995 photography which will allow me to update our GIS basemap at a fraction of what it would cost if we were forced to do this alone.

In Hammond our basemap was compiled to support infrastructure management. But we have also used GIS to support our Dept. of Environmental Management, Water Dept., Streets and Sanitation, Health Dept, Code Enforcement and others. One of the most important and exciting aspects of GIS here in Hammond is the impact it's had on Economic Development. GIS was directly involved in Wal-Mart's decision to open a store here, the development of our public golf course, and numerous efforts to support grant applications which have brought thousands of dollars into our community.

In support of Homeland security, this photography will have a great impact on the planning, risk management, mitigation and response to both natural as well as man-made threats. Lake County, and Hammond specifically, has a number of potential targets including major pipelines, tank farms and chemical plants as well as two very important transportation corridors (I-90 (the Indiana Toll road) and I-80/94 (the Borman Expressway)). This photography will allow our emergency planners and first responders to more accurately identify these features and create comprehensive plans for dealing with potential threats.

As co-chair of the Northwest Indiana GIS Forum, I see how this 2005 ortho-photography will change the face of GIS in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. Communities that could never dream of acquiring aerials of this accuracy and resolution are now talking about how they can use it to springboard them into GIS. The fact that this photography will be seamless across county lines has regional consortiums excited about the prospect of having the foundation for a

regional basemap for economic development, environmental studies, transportation planning and other projects which cross political boundaries.

As a member of the Indiana Geographic Council (IGIC), I have a statewide perspective on how this project will impact GIS in Indiana. Soon we will have an accurate, high-resolution, seamless set of aerials, which can be easily accessible to both rural and urban users. The fact that it will be in digital format and distributed with a free software for viewing will allow even the most cash-strapped communities and counties to access it with very little capital investment or technical know-how. It is IGIC's belief that this introduction into the world of digital spatial data will go a long way to promoting GIS technology statewide and help everyone understand its potential.

In summary, I would like to reiterate my support for this project and thank SEMA, IGIC, the Governor's Office and our elected officials for helping make the 2005 ortho-photography project a reality. I can't wait to get the data for Hammond!

Sincerely,

Rebecca J. McKinley, GISP  
GIS Manager, Hammond Sanitary District,  
NWI GIS Forum Co-Chair and  
IGIC Board Member